

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05 DHA-02
TRSE-00 L-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 H-01 SP-02 PRS-01
/039 W

-----098955 181253Z /45

R 181048Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3604

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 6347

LIMDIS

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, IR
SUBJ: CONVERSATIONS WITH IRANIAN OFFICIALS RE HUMAN RIGHTS

1. UNITED STATES POLICY ON HUMAN RIGHTS HAS BEEN A CENTRAL
FEATURE OF NEARLY EVERY CONVERSATION I HAVE HAD WITH THE SENIOR
IRANIAN OFFICIALS ON WHOM I HAVE CALLED DURING MY FIRST SIX
WEEKS IN TEHRAN. THIS INCLUDES THE SHAH (WITH WHOM I HAVE HAD
TWO DISCUSSIONS ON THE SUBJECT), THE EMPRESS (WHO DISCUSSED IT
AT LENGTH), AND MOST OF THE CABINET MINISTERS.

2. IN ALMOST EVERY INSTANCE, IT WAS MY IRANIAN INTERLOCUTOR
WHO RAISED THE ISSUE, EITHER DEFENSIVELY OR IN TERMS OF THE
"IMAGE PROBLEM WE HAVE IN THE UNITED STATES". AGAIN, IN
ALMOST EVERY INSTANCE, THE THRUST AND THE CONTENT OF US POLICY
SEEMED TO BE GENUINELY MISUNDERSTOOD. THE ASSUMPTION APPEARED
TO BE THAT WE ARE OPPOSED TO MONARCHICAL SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT
AND SEEK TO HAVE THEM REPLACED BY DEMOCRACIES.

3. I HAVE ATTEMPTED TO COUNTER THIS CONFUSION BY RECITING
AN ENCAPSULATED FORM OF SECRETARY VANCE'S SPEECH AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA AND CITING THE THREE GENERAL CATEGORIES
OF HUMAN RIGHTS WHICH CONCERN US.--WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE
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TO IRAN, I HAVE DEVELOPED A LITANY WHICH EXPRESSES THE CON-
VICTION THAT ARRESTS CAN BE MADE WITHOUT TORTURE, DETENTION
CAN BE SERVED WITHOUT ABUSES, AND JUSTICE CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED
WITHOUT ABANDONING DUE PROCESS. THE SHAH HAS TOLD ME THAT
HE ACCEPTS THRESE THREE POINTS AND WILL UNDERTAKE TO PUT THEM
INTO EFFECT.

4. MY CONCLUSION IS THAT THE U.S. CAMPAIGN ON HUMAN RIGHTS HAS TOUCHED IRANIAN LEADERS -- AND ABOVE ALL THE SHAH -- IN THE SENSITIVE SEAT OF THEIR PRIDE. THEY ARE A PROUD PEOPLE AND WILL TAKE STEPS TO REFURBISH THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD. IN PART, THIS IS BECAUSE IT OFFENDS THEIR PRIDE TO BE FOUND WANTING IN A MATTER CENTRAL TO CIVILIZED NORMS. THEY WISH TO BE COUNTED AMONG THE TRULY "CIVILIZED" NATIONS OF THE WORLD. AT THE SAME TIME, THIS SAME SENSE OF PRIDE WILL CAUSE THEM TO TAKE GREAT PAINS TO PROVE THAT THEIR PROGRESS IN HUMAN RIGHTS IS OF THEIR OWN BENEVOLENT INSPIRATION AND NOT THE RESULT OF U.S. PRODDING.

5. I BELIEVE WE CAN BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN GAINING OUR OBJECTIVES IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS IF WE CAN MAKE CLEAR IN OUR PUBLIC STATEMENTS THAT THE FORM OF GOVERNMENT IN ANY GIVEN COUNTRY IS NOT THE ISSUE WHICH CONCERNS US. MUCH OF THE UNOFFICIAL, AND CRITICAL, COMMENTARY EMANATING FROM THE UNITED STATES ABOUT IRAN SEEMS TO FOCUS ON THE FACT THAT THE SHAH IS "AUTOCRATIC", OR "UNDEMOCRATIC". THIS IS INTERPRETED HERE AS AN ATTACK UPON IRANIAN INSTITUTIONS AND OBFUSCATES THE FACT THAT WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT PRACTICES RATHER THAN PERSONALITIES OR SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HUMAN RIGHTS, POLITICAL LEADERS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 18-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TEHRAN06347
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770254-1178
Format: TEL
From: TEHRAN
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770745/aaaabncz.tel
Line Count: 85
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 40791d68-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1825154
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONVERSATIONS WITH IRANIAN OFFICIALS RE HUMAN RIGHTS
TAGS: SHUM, IR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/40791d68-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009